

14 November 1969

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Dear Henry

I have just read your letter in last week's NATURE. First, I should say that John Maddox has told me that there has been a rather poor response to our letter. Only about half a dozen people have written to him. He said that they all supported our point of view except one, which he was intending to publish, so I take it that he was referring to your letter.

I think there is not a large difference between our points of view and it might be sensible if we corresponded privately to try and define what they are. I have not as yet taken the step of consulting the other people who signed our letter.

Your point number 1 is very similar to our first point, except that ours would include the scientists of the host country. I take it that you would not object to the extension of your first point in this way. Your second point is an excellent one, both in its positive and its negative aspects and I personally would agree with it. Your third point did not occur to us but it is very sensible.

The points that we raised as numbers 2, 3 and 4 were the ones that came up in negotiating with the Greek Government, mainly because the French organization of scientists concerned with the matter had brought them up. It seems to me the crucial one is that concerning financial support. We would all be glad I think to avoid those occasions when we are addressed either by the Mayor of the City or some other official if we can find some excuse, and I would agree that it may not always be easy to ask a government to give an assurance that they would not make any propaganda about the meeting. However, direct financial support is I think a more important issue than you realize, especially for the younger

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generation. I would refer you to the letter that was written by some of the students that attended the Spetsai meeting, which was published in the issue of NATURE for September 13. They say, 'We consider it important that this school should in no way depend financially upon a government which we consider to be oppressive.' You will realize that this statement was made by the students who attended the meeting. Presumably there were quite a number of others who felt even more strongly on the subject and didn't therefore even attend. I expect you have also read the editorial which John Maddox wrote in the issue of NATURE in which our letter appeared. While I appreciate only too well, especially at this present moment, that it is not always an easy matter to obtain money for international meetings, I think you would be surprised at the way that many of the younger scientists regard the matter.

We tried in our letter to make a distinction, which is not easy, between direct support and indirect support, and you will see that John Maddox also discussed this in his editorial. I wish I could think of some form of words which would help. You have no doubt seen the point made in our third footnote. However, the crux of the matter is given in our fourth footnote and I think you should discuss it seriously with your colleagues.

I would be the first to agree that the whole matter can be often rather paradoxical. At the Spetsai meeting it had been agreed that the Government would pay for the initial reception. There was sufficiently strong feeling about this that two-thirds of the way through the meeting, when I had to make a statement to the students about our negotiations with the Greek Government, I announced that I myself would pay for the reception (in fact, since then, several of my colleagues also put something into the kitty). This announcement was received with applause. Yet you will notice that the main financial effect of this action was to transfer \$500 from our pockets into that of the colonel's. In spite of this, the applause showed that the students felt strongly about the matter. Whereas I think a previous generation of scientists would support your attitude, it would not surprise me if there were in the future increasing difficulty, especially from young scientists about taking money from governments which are actively disliked.

In short, I think the question of accepting money from such governments is the main difference between us and I should be very interested

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to know what you and Datta and other biochemists feel about it.

I suggest we treat this correspondence as private for the time being. If we can reach agreement, or an agreed difference of opinion, we might at a later date consider publishing something. In any case, I was very glad that you wrote your letter, which in spite of our differences, I think is a very valuable contribution to the discussion.

With all good wishes
Yours sincerely

F. H. C. Crick